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BALLADS

AND OTHER VERSES

BY
JAMES T. FIELDS

'Mustered from half-forgotten silent nooks—
The dusky purlieus of departed books."

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18.3.40

BOSTON
HOUGHTON, MIFFLIN AND COMPANY
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1881

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BALLADS AND OTHER VERSES.

THE OWL-CRITIC.

A LESSON TO FAULT-FINDERS.

"WHO stuffed that white owl?" No one spoke in the shop:
The barber was busy, and he could n't stop;
The customers, waiting their turns, were all reading
The "Daily," the "Herald," the "Post," little heeding
The young man who blurted out such a blunt question;
Not one raised a head, or even made a suggestion;
And the barber kept on shaving.

"Don't you see, Mister Brown,"
Cried the youth, with a frown,

"How wrong the whole thing is,
How preposterous each wing is,
How flattened the head is, how jammed down the neck is —
In short, the whole owl, what an ignorant wreck 't is!
I make no apology;
I 've learned owl-eology.
I 've passed days and nights in a hundred collections,
And cannot be blinded to any deflections
Arising from unskilful fingers that fail
To stuff a bird right, from his beak to his tail.
Mister Brown! Mister Brown!
Do take that bird down,
Or you 'll soon be the laughing-stock all over town!"
And the barber kept on shaving.

"I 've *studied* owls,
And other night fowls,
And I tell you
What I know to be true:
An owl cannot roost

With his limbs so unloosed;
No owl in this world
Ever had his claws curled,
Ever had his legs slanted,
Ever had his bill canted,
Ever had his neck screwed
Into that attitude.
He can't *do* it, because
'T is against all bird-laws.
Anatomy teaches,
Ornithology preaches
An owl has a toe
That *can't* turn out so!
I've made the white owl my study for years,
And to see such a job almost moves me to tears!
Mister Brown, I'm amazed
You should be so gone crazed
As to put up a bird
In that posture absurd!
To *look* at that owl really brings on a dizziness;
The man who stuffed *him* don't half know his business!"

And the barber kept on shaving.

"Examine those eyes.
I'm filled with surprise
Taxidermists should pass
Off on you such poor glass;
So unnatural they seem
They 'd make Audubon scream,
And John Burroughs laugh
To encounter such chaff.
Do take that bird down;
Have him stuffed again, Brown!"
And the barber kept on shaving.

"With some sawdust and bark
I could stuff in the dark
An owl better than that.
I could make an old hat
Look more like an owl
Than that horrid fowl,
Stuck up there so stiff like a side of coarse leather.
In fact, about *him* there 's not one natural feather."

Just then, with a wink and a sly normal lurch,
The owl, very gravely, got down from his perch,
Walked round, and regarded his fault-finding critic

(Who thought he was stuffed) with a glance analytic,
And then fairly hooted, as if he should say:
'Your learning 's at fault *this* time, any way;
Don't waste it again on a live bird, I pray.
I 'm an owl; you 're another. Sir Critic, good-day!"

And the barber kept on shaving.

CÆSAR'S QUIET LUNCH WITH CICERO.

Have you read how Julius Cæsar
Made a call on Cicero
In his modest Formian Villa,
Many and many a year ago?

"I shall pass your way," wrote Cæsar,
"On the Saturnalia, Third,
And I 'll just drop in, my Tullius,
For a quiet friendly word;

"Don't make a stranger of me, Marc,
Nor be at all put out,
A snack of anything you have
Will serve my need, no doubt.

"I wish to show my confidence —
The invitation 's mine —
I come to share your simple food,
And taste your honest wine."

Up rose M. Tullius Cicero,
And seized a Roman punch, —
Then mused upon the god-like soul
Was coming round to lunch.

"By Hercules!" he murmured low
Unto his lordly self,
"There are not many dainties left
Upon my pantry shelf!

"But what I have shall Julius share.
What ho!" he proudly cried,
"Great Cæsar comes this way anon
To sit my chair beside.

"A dish of lampreys quickly stew,
And cook them to a turn,
For that's his favorite pabulum
From Mamurra I learn."

. . . . .

His slaves obey their lord's command;
The table soon is laid
For two distinguished gentlemen, —
One rather bald, 't is said.

When lo! a messenger appears
To sound approach — and then,
"Brave Cæsar comes to greet his friend
With *twice a thousand men!*

"His cohorts rend the air with shouts;
That is their dust you see;
The trumpeters announce him near!"
Said Marcus, "Woe is me!

"Fly, Cassius, fly! assign a guard!
Borrow what tents you can!
Encamp his soldiers round the field,
Or I'm a ruined man!'

"Get sheep and oxen by the score!
Buy corn at any price!
O Jupiter! befriend me now,
And give me your advice!"

. . . . . .

It turned out better than he feared, —
Things proved enough and good, —
And Cæsar made himself at home,
And much enjoyed his food.

But Marcus had an awful fright, —
That cannot be denied;
"I 'm glad 't is over!" — when it was —
The host sat down and sighed,

And when he wrote to Atticus,
And all the story told,
He ended his epistle thus:
"J. C. 's a warrior bold,

"A vastly entertaining man,
In Learning quite immense,
So full of literary skill,
And most uncommon sense,

"But, frankly, I should never say
'No trouble, sir, at all;
And when you pass this way again,
Give us another call!'"

THE LUCKY HORSESHOE.

A FARMER travelling with his load
Picked up a horseshoe on the road,
And nailed it fast to his barn door,
That luck might down upon him pour,
That every blessing known in life
Might crown his homestead and his wife,
And never any kind of harm
Descend upon his growing farm.

But dire ill-fortune soon began
To visit the astounded man.
His hens declined to lay their eggs;
His bacon tumbled from the pegs,
And rats devoured the fallen legs;
His corn, that never failed before,
Mildewed and rotted on the floor;
His grass refused to end in hay;
His cattle died, or went astray:
In short, all moved the crooked way.

Next Spring a great drought baked the sod
And roasted every pea in pod;
The beans declared they could not grow
So long as nature acted so;
Redundant insects reared their brood
To starve for lack of juicy food;
The staves from barrel sides went off
As if they had the hooping-cough,
And nothing of the useful kind
To hold together felt inclined:
In short, it was no use to try
While all the land was in a fry.

One morn, demoralized with grief,
The farmer clamored for relief;
And prayed right hard to understand
What witchcraft now possessed his land;
Why house and farm in misery grew
Since he nailed up that "lucky" shoe.

While thus dismayed o'er matters wrong,
An old man chanced to trudge along,
To whom he told, with wormwood tears,
How his affairs were in arrears,

And what a desperate state of things
A picked-up horseshoe sometimes brings.

The stranger asked to see the shoe;
The farmer brought it into view;
But when the old man raised his head,
He laughed outright, and quickly said,
"No wonder skies upon you frown;
You 've nailed the horseshoe upside down!
Just turn it round, and soon you 'll see
How you and Fortune will agree."

The farmer turned the horseshoe round,
And showers began to swell the ground;
The sunshine laughed among his grain,
And heaps on heaps piled up the wain;
The loft his hay could barely hold;
His cattle did as they were told;
His fruit trees needed sturdy props
To hold the gathering apple crops;
His turnip and potato fields
Astonished all men by their yields;
Folks never saw such ears of corn
As in his smiling hills were born;

His barn was full of bursting bins —
His wife presented him with twins;
His neighbors marvelled more and more
To see the increase in his store;
And now the merry farmer sings,
"There are two ways of doing things;
And when for good luck you would pray,
Nail up your horseshoe the *right* way."

PATIENT MERCY JONES.

Let us venerate the bones
Of patient Mercy Jones,
Who lies underneath these stones.

This is her story as once told to me
By him who still loved her, as all men might see, —
Darius, her husband, his age seventy years,
A man of few words, but, for her, many tears.

Darius and Mercy were born in Vermont;
Both children were christened at baptismal font
In the very same place, on the very same day —
(Not much acquainted just then, I dare say).
The minister sprinkled the babies, and said,
"Who knows but this couple some time may be wed,
And I be the parson to join them together,
For weal or for woe, through all sorts of weather!"

Well, they *were* married, and happier folk
Never put both their heads in the same loving yoke.
They were poor, they worked hard, but nothing could try
The patience of Mercy, or cloud her bright eye.
She was clothed with Content as a beautiful robe;
She had griefs, — who has *not* on this changeable globe? —
But at such times she seemed like the sister of Job.

She was patient with dogmas where light never dawns,
She was patient with people who trod on her lawns;
She was patient with folks who said blue skies were gray,
And dentists and oxen that pulled the wrong way;
She was patient with phrases no husband should utter,
She was patient with cream that declined to be butter;
She was patient with buyers with nothing to pay,

She was patient with talkers with nothing to say;
She was patient with millers whose trade was to cozen,
And grocers who counted out ten to the dozen;
She was patient with bunglers and fault-finding churls,
And tall, awkward lads who came courting her girls;
She was patient with crockery no art could mend,
And chimneys that smoked every day the wrong end;
She was patient with reapers who never would sow,
And long-winded callers who never would go;
She was patient with relatives when, uninvited,
They came, and devoured, then complained they were slighted;
She was patient with crows that got into the corn,
And other dark deeds out of wantonness born;
She was patient with lightning that burned up the hay,
She was patient with poultry unwilling to lay;
She was patient with rogues who drank cider too strong,

She was patient with sermons that lasted too long;
She was patient with boots that tracked up her clean floors,
She was patient with peddlers and other smooth bores;
She was patient with children who disobeyed rules,
And, to crown all the rest, she was patient with fools.

The neighboring husbands all envied the lot
Of Darius, and wickedly got up a plot
To bring o'er his sunshine an unpleasant spot.
"You think your wife's temper is proof against fate,
But *we* know of something her smiles will abate.
When she gets out of wood, and for more is inclined,
Just send home the *crookedest* lot you can find;
Let *us* pick it out, let *us* go and choose it,
And we'll bet you a farm, when she comes for to use it,
Her temper will crack like Nathan Dow's cornet,
And she 'll be as mad as an elderly hornet."

Darius was piqued, and he said, with a *vum*,
"I 'll pay for the wood, if *you 'll* send it hum;
But depend on it, neighbors, no danger will come."

Home came the gnarled roots, and a crookeder load
Never entered the gate of a Christian abode.
A ram's horn was straighter than any stick in it;
It seemed to be wriggling about every minute;
It would not stand up, and it would not lie down;
It twisted the vision of one half the town;
To *look* at such fuel was really a sin,
For the chance was Strabismus would surely set in.

Darius said nothing to Mercy about it:
It *was* crooked wood — even *she* could not doubt it:
But never a harsh word escaped her sweet lips,
Any more than if the old snags were smooth chips.
She boiled with them, baked with them, washed with them through
The long winter months, and none ever knew

But the wood was as straight as Mehitable Drew,
Who was straight as a die, or a gun, or an arrow,
And who made it her business all male hearts to harrow.

When the pile was burned up, and they needed more wood,
"Sure, now," mused Darius, "I *shall* catch it good;
She has kept her remarks all condensed for the Spring,
And my ears, for the trick, now deserve well to sing.
She never *did* scold me, but now she will pout,
And say with *such* wood she is nearly worn out."

But Mercy, unruffled, was calm, like the stream
That reflects back at evening the sun's perfect beam;
And she looked at Darius, and lovingly smiled,
As she made this request with a temper unriled:
"We are wanting more fuel, I 'm sorry to say;
I burn a great deal too much wood every day,
And I mean to use less than I have in the past,

But get, if you can, dear, a load like the last;
I never had any I liked half so well, —
Do see who has nice *crooked* fuel to sell:
There 's nothing that 's better than wood full of knots,
It fays so complete round the kettles and pots,
And washing and cooking are really like play
When the sticks nestle close in so charming a way."

BALLAD OF THE WICKED NEPHEW.

It was a wicked Nephew bold
Who uprose in the night,
And ground upon a huge grindstone
His penknife, sharp and bright.

And, while the sparks were flying wild
The cellar-floor upon,
Quoth he unto himself, "I will
Dispatch my Uncle John!

"His property is large, and if
He dies, and leaves a Will,
His loving Nephew (that's myself)
Won't get a dollar-bill.

"I'll hie unto my Uncle's bed,
His chamber well I know,
And there I'll find his pocket-book
Safe under his pil-*low*.

"With this bright steel I'll slay him first,
Because that is the way
They do such things, I understand,
In Boucicault's new Play."

By this the anxious moon retired,
(For all the stars were in),—
"'T is very dark," the Nephew cried,
"But I can find my kin!"

"Come forth, my trusty weapon, now!"
(Or words to that effect,)
He shouted to his little blade,
Whose power he did suspect.

Then out he starts. His Uncle's door
Is thirteen doors from his:—
He gains the latch, which upward flies,
And straight inside he is!

One pause upon the entry stair,
And one upon the mat,—
How still the house at such an hour!
How mewless lies the cat!

"O Nephew! Nephew! be not rash;
Turn back, and then 'turn in:'
Your Uncle still is sound asleep,
And you devoid of sin!

"The gallows-tree was never built
For handsome lads like you,—
Get thee to bed! (as kind Macbeth
Wished *his* young man to do)."

He will not be advised,—he stands
Beside the sleeping form,—
The hail begins to beat outside
A tattoo for the storm.

"'Tis not too late,—repent, repent!
And all may yet be well!"
"Repent yourself!" the Nephew sneers,—
And at it goes pell-mell!

To right and left he carves his way,—
At least thus did it seem;
And, after he had done the deed,—
Woke up from his bad dream,

And swift to Uncle John he ran,
When daylight climbed the hill,
And told him all, — and Uncle John
Put Nephew in his Will.

THE MUSICAL BOY.

It is a ruthless, toothless wight
  Who dwells beside a wall,
And spends his time in singing songs
  As loud as he can bawl,
And casting stones at passengers
  Who may neglect to call.

The knave deals out inflated corn
  And other fluffy things,
Gum-balls and miscellaneous pies,
  And doughnuts shaped like rings;
The pea-nut branch he also plies,
  As all day long he sings.

"O urchin rude, of manners crude,
  Of unangelic voice,
Pray tell me true, young ruffian, do,
  If thus you live from choice,

Or if in your unhallowed ways
You really *don't* rejoice!

"Your wares are insalubrious,
Your carols are the same,
Your bold career is fraught with fear,
Your traffic one of shame, —
A dark, mysterious, dreadful trade,
A deed without a name.

"Boy, cease your harmful, dreary notes,
And fling your goods away;
Go get you to New Zealand, or
Some cove in Baffin's Bay:
Expenses out (but no return)
Myself will gladly pay."

The rogue looks up with knowing leer,
And bids me not repine,
Then aims a missile at my head
With phrase that 's not divine,
And croaks a still more dismal song, —
The words, alas! are *mine!*

LOT SKINNER'S ELEGY

Lot Skinner was the meanest man
That ever saved his neck;
He grudged the very breath he drew,
As if it were a check.

When he was in the grocer line,
And turning fruit to gold,
He 'd bite a raisin straight in halves
To make the weight he sold.

Day in and out, through heat and cold,
For thirty years or more,
He well observed the copper-mean,
And — something blessed his store.

He never gave a dime away,
He never lost a pin;
A ninepence saved rejoiced him more
Than taking ninepence in.

Of counterfeited bills he used
The best of every kind,
Which in the way of trade he kept,
To swap off on the blind.

The poor came round his counter's edge,
And raised a feeble cry:
"Don't speak so loud," the rogue exclaimed,
"For I am always nigh."

"'T is little things that make a pile," —
(This maxim he could trust.)
So, when he sawed his pile of wood,
He always saved the dust.

He had but one book in the house,
And *that* he never read!
'T was called "Economy of Life," —
And did him good, he said.

He welcomed in the rising moon, —
'T was such a cheerful sight;
For then he 'd blow the candle out,
And use the gratis light.

He liked in other people's pews
To settle meekly down,
And steal his preaching, here and there,
By sneaking round the town.

Sometimes we saw a greenish smile
Coil up his bony face:
'T was when the parson chose a theme
That spoke of *saving* grace.

At last it cost so much to live,—
(Per day some twenty cents,)
"I won't stand this!" he inly groaned,
And died to save expense.

Now, having gone where all his means
Are shut up in a box,
He cannot lift that heavy lid
The careful sexton locks.

Adieu! thou scrap of lifeless clay!
Thou pale-ink human blot!
This line shall be thine epitaph,—
"*An unproductive Lot!*"

JUPITER AND TEN.

Mrs. Chub was rich and portly,
Mrs. Chub was very grand,
Mrs. Chub was always reckoned
A lady in the land.

You shall see her marble mansion
In a very stately square, —
Mr. C. knows what it cost him,
But that's neither here nor there.

Mrs. Chub was so sagacious,
Such a patron of the arts,
And she gave such foreign orders,
That she won all foreign hearts.

Mrs. Chub was always talking,
When she went away from home,
Of a most prodigious painting
Which had just arrived from Rome.

"Such a treasure," she insisted,
"One might never see again!"
"What's the subject?" we inquired.
"*It is Jupiter and Ten!*"

"Ten *what?*" we blandly asked her,
For the knowledge we did lack.
"Ah! that I cannot tell you,
But the name is on the back.

"There it stands in printed letters.
Come to-morrow, gentlemen,
Come and see our splendid painting,
Our fine *Jupiter and Ten.*"

When Mrs. Chub departed,
Our brains we all did rack, —
She could not be mistaken,
For the name was on the back.

So we begged a great Professor
To lay aside his pen,
And give some information
Touching "Jupiter and Ten."

And we pondered well the subject,
And our Lemprière we turned,
To discover what the *Ten* were;
But we could not, though we burned!

But when we saw the picture, —
Oh, Mrs. Chub! Oh, fie! Oh!
We perused the printed label,
And 't was *Jupiter and Io!*

THE ALARMÈD SKIPPER.

"It was an Ancient Mariner."

MANY a long, long year ago,
Nantucket skippers had a plan
Of finding out, though "lying low,"
How near New York their schooners ran.

They greased the lead before it fell,
And then, by sounding through the night,
Knowing the soil that stuck, so well,
They always guessed their reckoning right.

A skipper gray, whose eyes were dim,
Could tell, by *tasting*, just the spot,
And so below he 'd "dowse the glim," —
After, of course, his "something hot."

Snug in his berth, at eight o'clock,
This ancient skipper might be found;
No matter how his craft would rock,
He slept, — for skippers' naps are sound!

The watch on deck would now and then
Run down and wake him, with the lead;
He'd up, and taste, and tell the men
How many miles they went ahead.

One night, 't was Jotham Marden's watch,
A curious wag, — the peddler's son, —
And so he mused (the wanton wretch),
"To-night I 'll have a grain of fun.

"We 're all a set of stupid fools
To think the skipper knows by *tasting*
What ground he 's on, — Nantucket schools
Don't teach such stuff, with all their basting!'

And so he took the well-greased lead
And rubbed it o'er a box of earth
That stood on deck, — a parsnip-bed, —
And then he sought the skipper's berth.

"Where are we now, sir? Please to taste."
The skipper yawnèd, put out his tongue,
Then oped his eyes in wondrous haste,
And then upon the floor he sprung!

The skipper stormed, and tore his hair,
Thrust on his boots, and roared to Marden,
"*Nantucket's sunk, and here we are*
Right over old Marm Hackett's garden!"

THE TURTLE AND FLAMINGO.

A SONG FOR MY LITTLE FRIENDS.

A LIVELY young turtle lived down by the banks
Of a dark-rolling stream called the Jingo,
And one summer day, as he went out to play,
Fell in love with a charming flamingo, —
An enormously genteel flamingo!
An expansively crimson flamingo!
A beautiful, bouncing flamingo!

Spake the turtle in tones like a delicate wheeze:
"To the water I've oft seen you in go,
And your form has impressed itself deep on my shell,
You perfectly modelled flamingo!
You uncommonly brilliant flamingo!
You tremendously scorching flamingo!
You inexpres-*si*-ble flamingo!

"To be sure, I'm a turtle and you are a belle,
And *my* language is not your fine lingo;
But smile on me, tall one, and be my bright flame,
You miraculous, wondrous flamingo!
You blazingly beauteous flamingo!
You turtle-absorbing flamingo!
You inflammably gorgeous flamingo!"

Then the proud bird blushed redder than ever before,
And that was quite un-nec-ces-*sa*-ry,
And she stood on one leg and looked out of one eye,
The position of things for to vary, —
This aquatical, musing flamingo!
This dreamy, uncertain flamingo!
This embarrassing, harassing flamingo!

Then she cried to the quadruped, greatly amazed:
"Why your passion toward *me* do you hurtle?
I'm an ornithological wonder of grace,
And you're an illogical turtle, —
A waddling, impossible turtle!
A low-minded, grass-eating turtle!
A highly improbable turtle!

"I measure four feet from my nose to my toes —
Just observe the flamboyant spec-*tacle!*
Do you think a flamingo like me would stoop down
Her fortune with yours, sir, to shackle?
I *can't*, you pre-*pos*-terous turtle!
You aldermaniculous turtle!
You damp and ridiculous turtle!"

Then the turtle sneaked off with his nose to the ground,
And never more looked at the lasses;
And falling asleep, while indulging his grief,
Was gobbled up whole by Agassiz, —
The peripatetic Agassiz!
The turtle-dissecting Agassiz!
The illustrious, industrious Agassiz

Go with me to Cambridge some cool pleasant day,
And the skeleton-lover I'll show you;
He's in a hard case, but he'll look in your face
Pretending (the rogue!) he don't know you!
Oh, the deeply deceptive young turtle!
The double-faced, glassy-cased turtle!
The *green*, but a very *mock* turtle!

A NEW AND TRUE GHOST STORY.

(MANCHESTER BY THE SEA.)

Come, my Tavvie, Jennie, Florie,
Paul and Maidie, if 't won't bore ye,
Come and hear my new ghost story!
"Certain true" it is, and therefore
Something that perhaps you 'll care for.

On the rocks we 'll sit together,
In this blessèd summer weather,
Holding hands, the moonlight watching,
With no fear of bad cold catching.

Paul, you rogue, if you don't falter,
You shall win a prime "Gibraltar,"
And the girls shall have four others,
Just as if they were our brothers.

Now we're seated, all is ready,
So be silent, firm, and steady.

Never mind, it is no matter,
If your teeth *do* clash and clatter.
They are *wisdom* teeth that chatter
When a true ghost story rises,
Filling us with new surprises.

On the beach that lies before ye
Is the scene of my ghost story,
And it came to pass in *Ju*-ly,
"Sure as eggs is eggs" and *tru*-ly.

Well, it really makes me shudder,
When I think in what a pudder
That same night my nerves went jumping,
And my heart kept loudly thumping.
Deary me! let's all sit snugger
In a general kind of hugger,
So if any sprite should bump us,
We'll together share the rumpus.

I'm a sleepless kind of fellow,
Moonlight always makes me mellow,
And I like to walk when people
Are as silent as yon steeple

Where the bell-rope has been rended
Twenty years, and can't be mended.

So last month, when all was stilly, —
Midnight, moonlight, nothing chilly, —
From our hill-top I descended,
And by "Masconomo" wended.
Overhead the stars ceased swinging,
Underfoot the beach stopped singing,
Not a mollusk then was stirring,
Not a fairy-puss was purring,
Not a love-sick periwinkle
His guitar took out to tinkle;
All the Syrens silver dripping
Into amber caves were slipping,
Even Neptune, that old schemer
Ventured to become a dreamer.
Everything and everybody
Passed into the land of Noddy.

I began to feel quite creepy,
Thinking of a world so sleepy,
Still I kept on walking, walking,
Sometimes to myself low talking,

Sometimes *sotto voce* chanting
Songs like Shelley's, that come haunting
All our fresh-awakened senses
With their lovely moods and tenses.
Tennyson I sang and shouted,
Longfellow's brave words I spouted,
Homer, with his grand emotion,
How I thundered to the ocean!
All the bards seemed there assembled,
As alone I walked and trembled.

In my memories and forgetries,
Never night had such *et cæteras;*
Never did the moon shine brighter,
Never did the waves dance lighter.
Warmth and coolth were gently blended,
Like two lovers, Triton-tended;
Every breeze came in caressing,
Freighted with an amorous blessing.

Solitude oped every portal.
Never was a lonelier mortal!
Still I trudged along and listened
Now and then, as round me glistened

Sand and rock, but not a whisper
Came from any human lisper.

What is that so white and tiny,
Moving slowly toward the briny
World before me, — onward gliding,
Pausing, resting, tripping, sliding?
Heavens! what is that baby vision,
Wandering there from haunts Elysian,
Coming nearer, nearer, nearer,
Growing clearer, clearer, clearer?

Soon my hair began to bristle,
And I tried in vain to whistle.
Could it be a ghost invidious,
Moving on with step insidious,
Bent on helpless man's destruction,
Like a vampire full of suction?
Should I run? that was the question.
Perish such a base suggestion!
No! because my limbs rheumatic
Banished feats on land aquatic.
Should I boldly face the danger,
And regard the little stranger?

Sure, that form is nothing human, —
Just a moonlit pigmy woman!

Now the figure ceases motion,
Gazing out upon the ocean.
What a pair of eyes to look on!
What an arm for love to hook on!
Oh, what golden ringlets rippled!
Mouth where spirits might have tippled,
And become inebriated,
Kissing oft, but never sated!
Pearly hands just left off waving,
Pinky toes in foam-beds laving.
What a ravishing admixture,
Gracing that infantine fixture!

What impelled me then to snatch up
In my arms this ghostly catch-up,
Who can tell? I can't determine,
But I did, as if 't were ermine,
Or a bunch of pure white roses,
Lilies, or any other posies.
Yes, I did, and then, good gracious!
What happened then? Don't be rapacious!

Five young listeners know the sequel,
To write it out I don't feel equal.
But, if you will take your pottage,
Some day, in our Gambrel Cottage,
I'll explain to lads and lasses
What the ghost was. It surpasses,
Paul says, mortal comprehension,
And quite worthy your attention.

MABEL, IN NEW HAMPSHIRE.

Fairest of the fairest, rival of the rose,
That is *Mabel of the Hills*, as everybody knows.

Do you ask me near what stream this sweet flow-
eret grows?
That 's an ignorant question, sir, as everybody
knows.

Ask you what her age is, reckoned as time goes?
Just the age of beauty, as everybody knows.

Is she tall as Rosalind, standing on her toes?
She is just the perfect height, as everybody knows.

What 's the color of her eyes, when they ope or
close?
Just the color they should be, as everybody knows.

Is she lovelier dancing, or resting in repose?
Both are radiant pictures, as everybody knows.

Do her ships go sailing on every wind that blows?
She is richer far than that, as everybody knows.

Has she scores of lovers, heaps of bleeding beaux?
That question 's quite superfluous, as everybody knows.

I could tell you something, if I only chose! —
But what 's the use of telling what everybody knows?

DON.

This is Don, the dog of all dogs,
Just as lions outrank small frogs,
Just as eagles are superior
To buzzards and that tribe inferior.

He 's a shepherd lad, — a beauty, —
And to praise him seems a duty,
But it puts my pen to shame, sir,
When his virtues I would name, sir.
"Don! come here and bend your head now,
Let us see your best well-bred bow!"
Was there ever such a creature?
Common-sense in every feature!
"Don! rise up and look around you!"
Blessings on the day we found you.

Sell him! well, upon my word, sir,
That 's a notion too absurd, sir.

Would I sell our little Ally,
Barter Tom, dispose of Sally,
Think you I 'd negotiate
For my *wife* at any rate?

Sell our Don! you 're surely joking,
And 't is fun at us you 're poking!
Twenty voyages we 've tried, sir,
Sleeping, waking, side by side, sir,
And Don and I will not divide, sir;
He 's my *friend*, that 's why I love him, —
And no mortal dog 's above him!

He prefers a life aquatic,
But never dog was less dogmatic.
Years ago, when I was master
Of a tight brig called the Castor,
Don and I were bound for Cadiz,
With the loveliest of ladies
And her boy — a stalwart, hearty,
Crowing, one-year infant party,
Full of childhood's myriad graces,
Bubbling sunshine in our faces

As we bowled along so steady,
Half-way home, or more, already.

How the sailors loved our darling!
No more swearing, no more snarling;
On their backs, when not on duty,
Round they bore the blue-eyed beauty, —
Singing, shouting, leaping, prancing, —
All the crew took turns in dancing;
Every tar played Punchinello
With the pretty, laughing fellow;
Even the second mate gave sly winks
At the noisy mid-day high jinks.
Never was a crew so happy
With a curly-headed chappy,
Never were such sports gigantic,
Never dog with joy more antic.

While thus jolly, all together,
There blew up a change of weather,
Nothing stormy, but quite breezy,
And the wind grew damp and wheezy,
Like a gale in too low spirits
To put forth one half its merits.

But, perchance, a dry-land ranger
Might suspect some kind of danger.

Soon our staunch and gallant vessel
With the waves began to wrestle,
And to jump about a trifle,
Sometimes kicking like a rifle
When 't is slightly overloaded,
But by no means nigh exploded.

'T was the coming on of twilight,
As we stood abaft the skylight,
Scampering round to please the baby
(Old Bill Benson held him, maybe),
When the youngster stretched his fingers
Towards the spot where sunset lingers,
And with strong and sudden motion
Leaped into the weltering ocean!

"*What* did Don do?" Can't you guess, sir?
He sprang also, — by express, — sir;
Seized the infant's little dress, sir,
Held the baby's head up boldly
From the waves that rushed so coldly;

And in just about a minute
Our boat had them safe within it.

Sell him! Would you sell your brother?
Don and I *love* one another!

THE SEARCH.

"Give me the girl whose lips disclose,
Whene'er she speaks, rare pearls in rows,
And yet whose words more genuine are
Than pearls or any shining star.

"Give me those silvery tones that seem
An angel's singing in a dream, —
A presence beautiful to view,
A seraph's, yet a woman's too.

"Give me that one whose temperate mind
Is always toward the good inclined,
Whose deeds spring from her soul unsought, —
Twin-born of grace and artless thought;

"Give me that spirit, — seek for her
To be my constant minister!"
Dear friend, — I heed your earnest prayers, —
I'll call your lovely wife down-stairs.

ON A PORTRAIT OF THE AUTHOR OF "RAB AND HIS FRIENDS."

HERE 's a face with many a furrow, —
John Brown's, of Edinboro':
Doctor John his cronies call him.
Oh, let nothing ill befall him,
Nothing cross his open door
But what bounteous fortunes pour!

Come! a health to that John Brown
Who, in Edinboro' town,
Practises for everybody,
Pay or *no* pay. There 's no shoddy
In his sterling-fine condition,
He is such "a *good* physician."

Give another stalwart health
To him who does grand things by stealth.
Him you 'll never find a-sleeping
When there 's Want or Sorrow weeping:

When there 's "something to be done,"
Straight to *Rutland* Street folks run.

Here 's a forehead without frown,
Signed and countersigned *John Brown.*
What a brain! itself 's a bumper:
Did you ever see a plumper, —
One more full of strength and kindness,
One for faults more prone to blindness;
Written so with love all over,
Like a hillock thick with clover, —
Like that dome, when Christmas comes,
Stuffed with everlasting plums?

Here 's John Brown engraved before ye:
Here 's a head that tells a story!
Spectacles on nose, — d' ye mind 'em? —
And a pair of eyes behind 'em
Throw such light on this old planet,
All your Tyndalls could not span it.

Come! a *rouse* to Doctor John,
Including Jock, his brawny son;
Including every dog he owns,

And dear old Rab, — Heaven keep *his* bones!
For, when the Doctor's sight grows dark,
That dog will give a kindly bark,
And lift his head once more to feel
A friendly arm around him steal,
And though in ghost-land, far away,
Where dogs (who knows?) are all at play,
Will start to hear his Scottish name,
And lick the hand that gave him fame.

BALLAD OF THE TEMPEST.

We were crowded in the cabin,
Not a soul would dare to sleep, —
It was midnight on the waters,
And a storm was on the deep.

'T is a fearful thing in winter
To be shattered in the blast,
And to hear the rattling trumpet
Thunder, "Cut away the mast!"

So we shuddered there in silence, —
For the stoutest held his breath,
While the hungry sea was roaring,
And the breakers talked with Death.

As thus we sat in darkness,
Each one busy in his prayers, —
"We are lost!" the captain shouted,
As he staggered down the stairs.

But his little daughter whispered
As she took his icy hand,
"Is not God upon the ocean,
Just the same as on the land?"

Then we kissed the little maiden,
And we spoke in better cheer;
And we anchored safe in harbor
When the morn was shining clear.

YOUTH'S SONG.

The pale moon-crescent in the azure slept,
And odorous violets mingled with our talk;
Anon the bells from all the turrets swept
A flood of music down the perfumed walk, —
Hurrying the golden hours, —
The tremulous, golden hours, —
The wingèd, passionate hours.

Then Time began his joyous course to run,
Zoning the fragrant earth with grace supreme;
Thenceforth our heaven has held a liberal sun,
Freighting our voyage of love o'er life's clear stream, —
Leading the golden hours, —
The tremulous, golden hours, —
The fleeting, fleeting hours.

WITH WORDSWORTH AT RYDAL.

The grass hung wet on Rydal banks,
The golden day with pearls adorning,
When side by side with him we walked
To meet midway the summer morning.

The west wind took a softer breath,
The sun himself seemed brighter shining,
As through the porch the minstrel stepped,
His eye sweet Nature's look enshrining.

He passed along the dewy sward,
The linnet sang aloft, "Good morrow!"
He plucked a bud, the flower awoke
And smiled without one pang of sorrow.

He spoke of all that graced the scene
In tones that fell like music round us;
We felt the charm descend, nor strove
To break the rapturous spell that bound us.

We listened with mysterious awe,
Strange feeling mingling with our pleasure;
We heard that day prophetic words, —
High thoughts the heart must always treasure.

Great Nature's Priest! thy calm career
Since that sweet morn on earth has ended;
But who shall say thy mission died
When, winged for heaven, thy soul ascended?

ON RECEIVING A LOCK OF KEATS'S HAIR.

Dear relic of a bright, immortal name,
Forever young and canopied by fame, —
I touch thy beauty with a tremulous thrill.

Oft in the columned city, when night's still
And starry-vestured hours seem prone to weep
Where Keats is laid in moon-enfolded sleep,
Among the daisies shrining his loved bones
Mid Death's mosaic, — green turf and white stones, —
I 've heard the song-birds with their music pass
Above their nested brother in the grass,
And thought with joy, and tear-suffusèd eyes, —
No serpent now lurks in his Paradise,
No venomed tongue can reach him with its hate, —
Wrapped in eternal quiet with the great!

ON A BOOK OF SEA-MOSSES,

SENT TO AN EMINENT ENGLISH POET.

To him who sang of Venice, and revealed
How Wealth and Glory clustered in her streets,
And poised her marble domes with wondrous skill,
We send these tributes, plundered from the sea.
These many-colored, variegated forms
Sail to our rougher shores, and rise and fall
To the deep music of the Atlantic wave.
Such spoils we capture where the rainbows drop,
Melting in ocean. Here are broideries strange,
Wrought by the sea-nymphs from their golden hair,
And wove by moonlight. Gently turn the leaf.
From narrow cells, scooped in the rocks, we take
These fairy textures, lightly moored at morn.
Down sunny slopes, outstretching to the deep,
We roam at noon, and gather shapes like these.
Note now the painted webs from verdurous isles,
Festooned and spangled in sea-caves, and say
What hues of land can rival tints like those,

Torn from the scarfs and gonfalons of kings
Who dwell beneath the waters.

Such our Gift,
Culled from a margin of the Western World,
And offered unto Genius in the Old.

AFTER HEARING MRS. KEMBLE READ "THE TEMPEST."

Thou great Enchantress, walking hand in hand
With him of Avon, nursed in Albion's isle, —
Whether we meet thee on the sea-beat sand,
Or gilding old Verona with thy smile, —
Welcome! thou fit attendant on his fame,
Whose glorious thoughts reëcho still his name!

Illumed by thee, those deathless pages glow
With added lustre naught but Genius gives:
Thou speak'st! thy melting tones their music throw
Along the lines, and lo! swift Ariel lives,
And sings, and, darting, drinks the silent air,
Then, fading, floats away, — we wist not where!

Thou bidd'st us forth where'er his fancy reigns:
Through verdurous Arden now we watch thee roam, —
Anon, thou call'st us to the Roman plains,
As if those dusky haunts had been thy home.

Where'er thou wilt, thou lead'st us, wondering, on,
Bound to the magic of thy beckoning tone.

Thou great restorer of departed breath!
Oh, front to front with him couldst thou but stand,
His spirit, wafted from the halls of Death
Back to its old domain, thy native land, —
How would our hearts with warmest rapture stir,
To hear that voice applaud his sweet Interpreter.

ON A VILLAGE CHURCH IN ENGLAND.

The air is sweet with violets, and the West
Robes in its evening splendor earth and sky.
Whoe'er thou art, here find repose. This spot,
In rustic beauty clad, wooes thee to rest.
The tongue of Time calls from the gray old tower,
And every leaf is whispering *Calm* and *Peace*.
Dear, welcome shrine! haunt of the good, farewell!
Oft in my distant home, at twilight hour,
Alone and still, shall I recall this scene, —
The ivied porch, the steeple touched with light,
The hedgerows green, oaks that the centuries crown,
The kindly voices Friendship newly gave,
The chime of waters musical and low,
And songs of birds careering up to heaven.

ON A PORTRAIT OF CROMWELL.

"PAINT me as I am," said Cromwell,
Rough with age and gashed with wars;
"Show my visage as you find it,—
Less than truth my soul abhors."

This was he whose mustering phalanx
Swept the foe at Marston Moor;
This was he whose arm uplifted
From the dust the fainting poor.

God had made his face uncomely,—
"Paint me as I am," he said;
So he *lives* upon the canvas
Whom they chronicled as *dead!*

Simple justice he requested
At the artist's glowing hands,
"Simple justice!" from his ashes
Cries a voice that still commands.

And, behold! the page of History,
  Centuries dark with Cromwell's name,
Shines to-day with burning lustre
  From the light of Cromwell's fame!

THE KING AND THE POET.

FROM THE GERMAN.

In the old Cathedral resting,
Two coffins press the stones;
One holds the great King Ottmar,
And one the poet's bones.

High in his power, the monarch
Ancestral glories led;
The sword lies in his right hand,
And the crown upon his head.

The minstrel near the proud king
Is laid in quiet sleep, —
His lifeless hands enfolded,
His gentle harp to keep.

Castles and towers are falling, —
A war-cry thrills the land, —

But the sword it moveth never
In the dead king's hand.

Through valleys, sweet with blossoms,
Mild breezes float along,
And the poet's harp is sounding
In never-dying song.

AN INVITATION.

The warm wide hills are muffled thick with green,
And fluttering swallows fill the air with song.
Come to our cottage-home. Lowly it stands,
Set in a vale of flowers, deep fringed with grass.
The sweet-brier (noiseless herald of the place)
Flies with its odor, meeting all who roam
With welcome footsteps to our small abode.
No splendid cares live here, — no barren shows.
The bee makes harbor at our perfumed door,
And hums all day his breezy note of joy.

Come, O my friend! and share our festal month,
And while the west wind walks the leafy woods,
While orchard-blooms are white in all the lanes,
And brooks make music in the deep cool dells,
Enjoy the golden moments as they pass,
And gain new strength for days that are to come.

FOR THE INAUGURATION OF FRANKLIN'S STATUE IN HIS NATIVE CITY.

Give welcome to his sculptured form!
Art's splendid triumph here is won, —
Thus let him stand in light and storm,
Our sea-girt city's greatest son.

His lineage sprung from honest toil,
Swart Labor trained his youthful hand;
High with the brave who freed our soil —
Where first he breathed let Franklin stand.

His genius stamped the Press with power;
His glance the glowing future saw;
His science curbed the fiery shower;
His wisdom stood with Peace and Law.

The world his story long has shrined, —
To Fame his spotless deeds belong, —
His homely Truth, his ample Mind,
His Saxon hate of human Wrong.

Room for the gray-haired patriot-sage!
For here his genial life began;
Thus let him look from age to age,
And prompt new Thought ennobling Man.

PERDITA.

A SWEET-BRIER grew at my door,
And perfumed the ground at my feet;
Was it a rose? — it was *she*
Who made all the pathway so sweet!

A bonny bird sang in the eaves, —
What music with that can compare!
Was it a *bird?* — it was *she*
Whose voice had enchanted the air!

Oh the brier-rose drooped on its stalk,
And the bonny bird flitted away,
But the fragrance and song in my heart
For ever and ever will stay!

"THE STORMY PETREL."

Where the gray crags beat back the northern main,
And all around, the ever-restless waves,
Like white sea-wolves, howl on the lonely sands,
Clings a low roof, close by the sounding surge.
If, in your summer rambles by the shore,
His spray-tost cottage you may chance espy,
Enter and greet the blind old mariner.

Full sixty winters he has watched beside
The turbulent ocean, with one purpose warmed
To rescue drowning men. And round the coast —
For so his comrades named him in his youth —
They know him as "The Stormy Petrel" still.

Once he was lightning-swift, and strong; his eyes
Peered through the dark, and far discerned the wreck
Plunged on the reef. Then with bold speed he flew,
The life-boat launched, and dared the smiting rocks.

'T is said by those long dwelling near his door,
That hundreds have been storm-saved by his arm;
That never was he known to sleep, or lag
In-doors, when danger swept the seas. His life
Was given to toil, his strength to perilous blasts.
In freezing floods when tempests hurled the deep,
And battling winds clashed in their icy caves,
Scared housewives, waking, thought of him, and said,
"'The Stormy Petrel' is abroad to-night,
And watches from the cliffs."
He could not rest
When shipwrecked forms might gasp amid the waves,
And not a cry be answered from the shore.

Now Heaven has quenched his sight; but when he hears
By his lone hearth the sullen sea-winds clang,
Or listens, in the mad, wild, drowning night,
As younger footsteps hurry o'er the beach
To pluck the sailor from his sharp-fanged death,—
The old man starts, with generous impulse thrilled,
And, with the natural habit of his heart,

Calls to his neighbors in a cheery tone,
Tells them he 'll pilot toward the signal guns,
And then, remembering all his weight of years,
Sinks on his couch, and weeps that he is blind.

MOONRISE AT SEA.

A CHILD SPEAKS.

Come up! the moon is rising fast,
  The sea is calm, the deck is clear:
  Come, mother, stay no longer here,
The moonlight will not always last.

Do you remember once you talked
  With me of Christ upon the sea?
  Now hearken, for this seems to me
The shining path where Jesus walked!

And when the silvery brightness came
  Along the sparkling waves to-night,
  My heart leaped trembling at the sight,
And then I spoke our Saviour's name.

I should not fear His holy will,
  If now He stood in yon bright place,
  And I could see His blessèd face,
And hear Him whisper, "Peace, be still!"

SPRING, AMONG THE HILLS.

Sit and talk with the mountain streams
In the beautiful spring of the year,
When the violet gleams through the golden sunbeams,
And whispers, "Come look for me here" —
In the beautiful spring of the year.

I will show you an odorous nook
Where the censers of morning are swung;
Nature will lend you her bell and her book
Where the chimes of the forest are hung —
And the censers of morning are swung.

Come and breathe in this heaven-sent air
The breeze that the wild-bird inhales,
Come and forget that life has a care,
In these exquisite mountain-gales —
The breeze that the wild-bird inhales.

O wonders of God! — O Bounteous and Good —
We feel that thy presence is here, —
That thine audible voice is abroad in this wood
In the beautiful spring of the year, —
And we know that *our Father* is here.

THE MEMORY OF MOORE.

MAY 28, 1879.

PLEDGE now to the Minstrel whose undying numbers
Still set the heart bounding wherever they rise, —
The laurel-crowned Singer, whose fame never slumbers
Or wanders unknown beneath alien skies.

Can we ever forget them, the notes so enchanting
That stole on our senses with youth's fairy chimes, —
Those magical sounds all our after years haunting,
That echo like watchwords from happier climes?

Who taught us that Music and Song were both given
To kindle the soul to Love, Valor, and Joy?

Whose melodies charmed us like strains out of Heaven,
When a mother's dear voice sang them first to her boy?

Who taught us to welcome that swelling emotion
Which soldiers and martyrs and patriots feel, —
That wave which rolls on like the floods of the ocean
When despots are forging their fetters of steel?

Who taught us that chains for the mind are unholy, —
That Speech should be safe as wild birds on the wing?
Who strove to uplift from their bondage the lowly,
And ope the dumb lips that were longing to sing?

Let Freedom unroll her bright flag! for beneath it,
Proudly smiling, she points to her bard's cherished name.
Oh garland his tomb! Let the Shamrock enwreathe it,
And Erin forever exult in his fame!

MIDNIGHT SONG BY THE SHORE.

I.

Alone among the rocks I stand
And watch the flaming path expand
From far horizon to the strand, —
And ask this question o'er and o'er: —

II.

"Tell me, thou Moon that mocks the night
With such effulgence of delight
Along the ocean in thy flight, —
When will thy myriad wanderings cease?"

III.

In vain! there comes no answering cry
From the illumined midnight sky, —
Only the deep calm waves reply,
"Pilgrim of earth! be dumb and wait!"

ON A PAIR OF ANTLERS,

BROUGHT FROM GERMANY.

Gift from the land of song and wine, —
  Can I forget the enchanted day,
When first along the glorious Rhine
  I heard the huntsman's bugle play,
And marked the early star that dwells
Among the cliffs of Drachenfels!

Again the isles of beauty rise, —
  Again the crumbling tower appears,
That stands, defying stormy skies,
  With memories of a thousand years,
And dark old forests wave again,
And shadows crowd the dusky plain.

They brought the gift that I might hear
  The music of the roaring pine, —
To fill again my charmèd ear
  With echoes of the Rodenstein, —

With echoes of the silver horn, —
Across the wailing waters borne.

Trophies of spoil! henceforth your place
Is in this quiet home of mine;
Farewell the busy, bloody chase,
Mute emblems now of "auld lang syne,"
When Youth and Hope went hand in hand
To roam the dear old German land.

LAST WORDS IN A STRANGE LAND.

Oh, to be home again, home again, home again,
Under the apple-boughs, down by the mill, —
Mother is calling me, father is calling me,
Calling me, calling me, calling me still.

Oh, how I long to be wandering, wandering
Through the green meadows and over the hill, —
Sisters are calling me, brothers are calling me,
Calling me, calling me, calling me still.

Oh, once more to be home again, home again,
Dark grows my sight and the evening is chill, —
Do you not hear how the voices are calling me,
Calling me, calling me, calling me still?

THE SONG-QUEEN.

Look on her! there she stands, the world's prime wonder,
The great Queen of Song! Ye rapt musicians,
Touch your golden wires, for now ye prelude strains
To mortal ears unwonted. Hark! she sings.
Yon pearly gates their magic waves unloose,
And all the liberal air rains melody
Around. O night! O time! delay, delay!
Pause here, entranced. Ye evening winds, come near,
But whisper not; and you, ye flowers, fresh culled
From odorous nooks, where silvery rivulets run,
Breathe silent incense still.
Hail, matchless Queen!
Thou, like the high white Alps, canst hear, unspoiled,
The world's artillery (thundering praises) pass,
And keep serene and safe thy spotless fame!

THE ALPINE CROSS.

Benighted once where Alpine storms
Have buried hosts of martial forms,
Halting with fear, benumbed with cold,
While swift the avalanches rolled,
Shouted our guide, with quivering breath,
"*The path is lost! — to move is death!*"

The savage snow-cliffs seemed to frown,
The howling winds came fiercer down:
Shrouded in such a dismal scene,
No mortal aid whereon to lean,
Think you what music 't was to hear,
"*I see the Cross! — our way is clear!*"

We looked, and there amid the snows,
A simple cross of wood uprose;
Firm in the tempest's awful wrath
It stood, to guide the traveller's path,
And point to where the valley lies,
Serene beneath the summer skies.

One dear companion of that night
Has passed away from mortal sight;
He reached his home to droop and fade,
And sleep within his native glade;
But as his fluttering hand I took,
Before he gave his farewell look,
He whispered from his bed of pain,
"*The Alpine Cross I see again!*"
Then, smiling, sank to endless rest
Upon his weeping mother's breast!

CANZONET.

(TO A VENETIAN AIR.)

Clarian, beautiful and young,—
Poet's lyre was never strung,
Burning lips have never sung
To a sweeter, dearer theme:
What can such as I bring you,
Maiden, beautiful and true?—
Only music in a dream!

Is it music that I bring
From a worn and loosened string,—
(Once it sang like birds in spring
When in upper air they fly!)
Clarian, when your loveliness
Dawns upon a soul to bless,
It must sing, or it will die!

A POOR MAN'S EPITAPH.

He was not what the world counts rich,
Houses and lands had none in store;
But blessed with strength for honest toil,
He neither asked nor strove for more.

His neighbors moved in higher ranks,
And far above him all could shine;
He lived with Health, and brave Content,
And water drank instead of wine.

"Enough for me," he said, "if here
My table 's spread when hunger calls,
To leave me something for a friend
Whose lot than mine still lower falls;

"And if the rainy days should come,
And I've no silver hoarded by,
How can I want, if Him I trust
Who feeds the ravens when they cry?

"Around my board a place I'll keep
For pallid lips that pine in woe,
And better gifts than I impart
Shall unseen angel-hands bestow!"

See where he sleeps who served mankind, —
Who wept and watched with weeping eyes!
Walk round his grave with reverent steps,
For there a more than hero lies.

THE LOVER'S PERIL.

Have I been ever wrecked at sea,
And nigh to being drowned?
More threatening storms have compassed me
Than on the deep are found!

What coral-reefs her dangerous lips!—
My bark was almost gone—
Hope plunged away in dim eclipse,
And black the night rolled on.

What seas are like her whelming hair,
That swept me o'er and o'er?—
I heard the waters of despair
Crash round the frightened shore!

"*Come, Death!*" I murmured in my cries,—
For signals none were waved,—
When both lighthouses in her eyes
Shone forth, and I was saved!

VESPERS.

TRINITA DE' MONTI, ROME.

Arise! the sun-clouds warn us it is time.
The door swings open, let us enter here
Up the steep steps with noiseless foot we climb,
As if they led to some celestial sphere.

Listen! the nuns are gliding in unseen;
And now begins the low, heart-melting strain.
Your tears are falling, — let them fall, — nor screen
From me your eyes; I know that sad, sweet pain.

Again that solemn penitential wail!
Your clasped hands tremble; — now the voices die.
Let us go hence; your quivering lips turn pale;
Hushed is the hymn so like an angel's sigh.

The day is fled; these walls are not our home;
Forth in the breeze of evening let us stand.
Come! lean on me as we descend to Rome,
From what has seemed the angels' spirit-land!

FIRESIDE EVENING-HYMN.

Hither, bright angels, wing your flight,
And stay your gentle presence here;
Watch round, and shield us through the night,
That every shade may disappear.

How sweet, when Nature claims repose,
And darkness floats in silence nigh,
To welcome in, at daylight's close,
Those radiant troops that gem the sky!

To feel that unseen hands we clasp,
While feet unheard are gathering round, —
To know that we in faith may grasp
Celestial guards from heavenly ground!

Oh, ever thus, with silent prayer
For those we love, may night begin, —
Reposing safe, released from care,
Till morning leads the sunlight in.

HONORIA.

WRITE this in sunbeams on Honoria's tomb,
And be her dust forever consecrate: —

"Daughter of Helpfulness, she ever strove
By numerous acts of secret charity
And words of cheerful import to incline
All suffering souls to lean on heavenly things.
Her gifts were lowly, but her heart outran
Her gifts. She had no vaunt of self, no pride
In deeds conspicuous, no ambitious flights
To achieve in place, or wealth, or praise. She lived
That others might be happy, and deserve
The happiness they gained. Benevolence
With her went hand in hand with Wisdom;
Never Want turned hopeless from her door,
But inwardly resolved henceforth to struggle
Into higher aims."

Hark, how the blithe birds

Chant about her grave! No requiem fitter
To embalm in song the harmonious beauty
Of a gentle life sacred to Helpfulness
And Human Love

RELICS

You ask me why with such a jealous care
I heard these rings, this chain of silken hair,
This cross of pearl, this simple key of gold,
And all these trifles which my hands enfold.
I 'll tell you, friend, why all these things become
My blest companions when remote from home;
Why, when I sleep, these first secured I see,
With wakeful eye and guarded constancy.
Each little token, each familiar toy,
My mother gave her once too happy boy;
Her kiss went with them. Chide me, then, no more,
That thus I count my treasures o'er and o'er.
Alas! she sleeps beneath the dust of years,
And these few flowers I water with my tears!

A SOLDIER'S ANCESTRY.

When Nadir sought a princess for his son,
And Delhi's throne required his pedigree,
He stared upon the messenger as one
Who should have known his birth of bravery

"Go back," he cried, in undissembled scorn,
"And bear this answer to your waiting lord:
'My child is noble! for, though lowly born,
He is the son and grandson of the *Sword!*'"

AGASSIZ.

Once in the leafy prime of Spring,
When blossoms whitened every thorn,
I wandered through the Vale of Orbe
Where Agassiz was born.

The birds in boyhood he had known
Went flitting through the air of May,
And happy songs he loved to hear
Made all the landscape gay.

I saw the streamlet from the hills
Run laughing through the valleys green,
And, as I watched it run, I said,
"This *his* dear eyes have seen!"

Far cliffs of ice his feet have climbed
That day outspoke of him to me;
The avalanches seemed to sound
The name of *Agassiz!*

And, standing on the mountain crag
  Where loosened waters rush and foam,
I felt that, though on Cambridge side,
    He made that spot my home.

And, looking round me as I mused,
  I knew no pang of fear, or care,
Or homesick weariness, because
    Once Agassiz stood there!

I walked beneath no alien skies,
  No foreign heights I came to tread,
For everywhere I looked, I saw
    His grand, beloved head.

His smile was stamped on every tree,
  The glacier shone to gild his name,
And every image in the lake
    Reflected back his fame.

Great keeper of the magic keys
  That could unlock the guarded gates
Where Science like a Monarch stands,
    And sacred Knowledge waits,—

Thine ashes rest on Auburn's banks,
Thy memory all the world contains,
For thou couldst bind in human love
All hearts in golden chains!

Thine was the heaven-born spell that sets
Our warm and deep affections free, —
Who knew thee best must love thee best,
And longest mourn for thee!

COMMON SENSE.

She came among the gathering crowd,
A maiden fair, without pretence,
And when they asked her humble name,
She whispered mildly, "Common Sense."

Her modest garb drew every eye,
Her ample cloak, her shoes of leather;
And, when they sneered, she simply said,
"I dress according to the weather."

They argued long, and reasoned loud,
In dubious Hindoo phrase mysterious,
While she, poor child, could not divine
Why girls so young should be so serious.

They knew the length of Plato's beard,
And how the scholars wrote in Saturn;
She studied authors not so deep,
And took the Bible for her pattern.

And so she said, "Excuse me, friends,
I find all have their proper places,
And *Common Sense* should stay at home
With cheerful hearts and smiling faces."

COURTESY.

How sweet and gracious, even in common speech,
Is that fine sense which men call Courtesy!
Wholesome as air and genial as the light,
Welcome in every clime as breath of flowers, —
It transmutes aliens into trusting friends,
And gives its owner passport round the globe.

TO T. S. K.

Go, with a manly heart,
Where courage leads the brave;
High thoughts, not years, have stamped their part,
Who shunned the coward's grave.

Clear, to the eye of youth,
Their record stands enrolled,
Who held aloft the flag of Truth,
Nor slept beneath its fold.

They heard the trumpet sound
Where hosts to battle trod,
And marched along that burning ground:
Fear not! they rest with God.

Like them, advance in love,
And upward bend thy sight;
Win Faith through prayer: He rules above
Who still protects the right,

DIRGE FOR A YOUNG GIRL.

Underneath the sod, low lying,
Dark and drear,
Sleepeth one who left, in dying,
Sorrow here.

Yes, they 're ever bending o'er her,
Eyes that weep:
Forms, that to the cold grave bore her,
Vigils keep.

When the summer moon is shining
Soft and fair,
Friends she loved in tears are twining
Chaplets there.

Rest in peace, thou gentle spirit,
Throned above;
Souls like thine with God inherit
Life and love!

PINKS.

(A MODEST REQUEST.)

You ask me what flower I prefer,
And it takes but a moment to think,
For its perfume is like nothing else,
And the name of that same is a *pink*, —
A *red* pink.

When you bid me to dine or to sup,
Or invite me to breakfast or lunch,
Put a knot of them under my nose,
And hand me, when leaving, the bunch, —
The *whole* bunch!

A SUMMER RETREAT.

I KNOW a cottage by the sounding main
Where Life and Happiness together dwell.
The village bells behind, in front the surging waves
Commingle notes that lull the soul to rest.
Circling round, the green old forests populous
With birds join the great anthem, both at morn
And eve. High on an ancient crag, the roof
Looks heavenward, asking only quiet days
And thoughts serene for those who nestle there.
Descend into the summer vale below
Perfumed with orchards and the breath of ferns,
Rustling with squirrels, — blithe inhabitants
That unmolested roam, and run at random
Where they list, like gamesome children up, and down
The rocky pathways, deep in dewy moss.
'T is a wild pleasure to be breathing there —
Far from the turbulent city, clanging loud
With care, its burning pavement scorching

Weary feet, its blistering dome on fire; —
To watch the clouds that cool yon sandy shores;
To see the day, slow mounting, light the world;
To hear, sea-fanned at noon, the sweet south-wind
In music blowing from the fragrant deep;
To hail the moon emerging from her caves,
And track her starry followers up the skies.

O Universal Father! mould our hearts
In harmony with all these sinless shapes,
These sounds, so vocal of thyself, eternal
Witnesses of Power and all-embracing Love.

A BRIDAL MELODY.

She stood, like an angel just wandered from heaven,
A pilgrim benighted away from the skies,
And little we deemed that to mortals were given
Such visions of beauty as came from her eyes.

She looked up and smiled on the many glad faces.
The friends of her childhood, who stood by her side;
But she shone o'er them all, like a queen of the Graces,
When, blushing, she whispered the vow of a bride.

We sang an old song, as with garlands we crowned her,
And each left a kiss on her delicate brow;
And we prayed that a blessing might ever surround her,
And the future of life be unclouded as now.

PRESENCE.

A SONG OF SUMMER.

ONCE she walked through our valley, —
Since then it has blossomed more sweet;
You can tell now the fragrant wood-paths
So gladdened that day by her feet.

The eglantine nodded a welcome,
And the bayberry lifted its head;
"*She is passing this way,*" breathed the fern-grove;
"*She is here!*" all the white birches said.

Go and rest under the oak-boughs,
Or wander beneath the tall pine,
And you 'll still hear the tones so like music
Of this sunny-haired neighbor of mine.

Last night as I came by the beech-trees
They called to me out of the rain,
"*Where lingers the lily of maidens,*
And when shall we greet her again?"

MONMOUTH.

Reach a hand out to Monmouth, and not pass
him by
With a stare of contempt and a pitiless eye.
He is poor, he is sad, and a drunkard, I fear,—
Reach a hand out to Monmouth, give Monmouth a
tear!

Ah, God! what a ravage of sin and decay!
What a wreck of the youth once so genial and gay!
So witty at college, so full of brave cheer!—
Reach a hand out to Monmouth, give Monmouth a
tear!

How proudly we marshalled ourselves in his name,
When the country demanded his gifts for her fame!
How his voice in the Senate rang lofty and clear!—
Reach a hand out to Monmouth, give Monmouth a
tear!

A vassal to Pleasure, of Error the slave,
O'ermastered by passions that drag to the grave,
We have watched him sink deeper and faster each year, —
Reach a hand out to Monmouth, give Monmouth a tear!

Too late to restore him? — 't is *never* too late
To strive for a soul drifting down to its fate.
His *heart* is not dead; bring him back from the rear, —
Reach a hand out to Monmouth, give Monmouth a tear!

Let us rally around him, and never despise
A brother in ruins, but *help* him to rise.
If we *win*, what a rapture will be our reward!
For Monmouth again of himself will be lord.

A PROTEST.

Go, sophist! dare not to despoil
  My life of what it sorely needs
In days of pain, in hours of toil, —
  The bread on which my spirit feeds.

You see no light beyond the stars,
  No hope of lasting joys to come?
I feel, thank God, no narrow bars
  Between me and my final home!

Hence with your cold sepulchral bans, —
  The vassal doubts Unfaith has given!
My childhood's heart within the man's
  Still whispers to me, "Trust in Heaven!"

EVENTIDE IN THE COUNTRY.

This cottage door, this gentle gale,
Hay-scented, whispering round,
Yon path-side rose, that down the vale
Breathes incense from the ground,
Methinks should from the dullest clod
Invite a thankful heart to God.

But, Lord, the violet, bending low,
Seems better moved to praise;
From us what scanty blessings flow,
How voiceless close our days!
Father, forgive us, and the flowers
Shall lead in prayer the vesper hours.

A CHARACTER.

O HAPPIEST he, whose riper years retain
The hopes of youth, unsullied by a stain!
His eve of life in calm content shall glide,
Like the still streamlet to the ocean tide:
No gloomy cloud hangs o'er his tranquil day;
No meteor lures him from his home astray;
For him there glows with glittering beam on high
Love's changeless star that leads him to the sky;
Still to the past he sometimes turns to trace
The mild expression of a mother's face,
And dreams, perchance, as oft in earlier years,
The low, sweet music of her voice he hears.

THE WHITE-THROATED SPARROW.

ON HEARING HIS SONG IN THE WHITE MOUNTAINS.

Hark! 't is our Northern nightingale that sings
In far-off leafy cloisters, high and cool,
Flinging his flute-notes bounding from the skies!

Thou wild musician of the mountain streams,
Most tuneful minstrel of the forest choir,
Bird of all grace and harmony of soul,
Unseen we hail thee for thy blissful voice.

Up in yon tremulous mist where morning wakes
Unnumbered shadows from their dark abodes,
Or in the woodland glade tumultuous grown,
With all the murmurous language of the trees,
No blither presence fills the vocal space.
The wandering rivulets dancing through the grass,
The gambols, low or loud, of insect life,
The cheerful call of cattle in the vales,

Sweet natural sounds of the contented hours, —
All seem more jubilant when thy song begins.

Deep in the shade we lie and listen long;
For human converse well may pause, and man
Learn from such notes fresh hints of praise
That upward swelling from thy grateful tribe
Circle the hills with melodies of joy.

A VALENTINE.

She that is fair, though never vain or proud,
More fond of home than fashion's changing crowd,
Whose taste refined even female friends admire,
Dressed not for show, but robed in neat attire;
She who has learned, with mild, forgiving breast,
To pardon frailties, hidden or confest;
True to herself, yet willing to submit,
More swayed by love than ruled by worldly wit;
Though young, discreet, though ready, ne'er unkind,
Blessed with no pedant's, but a *Woman's* mind;
She wins our hearts, towards *her* our thoughts incline,
So at her door go leave my Valentine.

IN SPRING-TIME.

Every year when young April, just wakened, comes round
With her robins all ready to sing,
Let us bless the dear God that we still are alive
To welcome another new Spring;
That above, and not under, the blossoming ground
Our limbs are yet active and strong;
That still we can breathe in the sweet vernal air,
And hear Nature's marvellous song.

The brooks, making melody under the sky,
Call the blood of youth back into age,—
The heart of the universe seems keeping time
To delights wherein all can engage.
The flower of life and the flower of love
Are everywhere blooming to-day;
Death and darkness no longer stalk blind through the world;
So let us take hands, and be gay.

SUMMER-EVENING MELODY.

Go forth! the sky is blue above,
And cool the green sod lies below;
It is the hour that claims for love
The halcyon moments as they flow.

The glowworm lends her twinkling lamp,
The cricket sings his soothing strain,
And fainter sounds the weary tramp
Of footsteps in the grassy lane.

Go forth, ye pallid sons of care!
Too long your thoughts to earth are given;
To-night sweet music haunts the air,
And fragrant odors breathe of heaven!

IN THE FOREST.

Through the proud isles of old cathedral woods
What echoing voices break the solitudes!
At matin-hour go hear, on green hillside,
Bells of bird-music ringing far and wide,
While mountain streams that burst their prison crags
Run down the rocks and wave their snow-white flags.

. . . . . .

THE PERPETUITY OF SONG.

It was a blithesome young jongleur
Who started out to sing,
Eight hundred years ago, or more,
On a leafy morn in spring;
And he carolled sweet as any bird
That ever tried its wing.

Of love his little heart was full, —
Madonna! how he sang!
The blossoms trembled with delight,
And round about him sprang,
As forth among the banks of Loire
The minstrel's music rang.

The boy had left a home of want
To wander up and down,
And sing for bread and nightly rest
In many an alien town,
And bear whatever lot befell, —
The alternate smile and frown.

The singer's carolling lips are dust,
And ages long since then
Dead kings have lain beside their thrones,
Voiceless as common men, —
But Gerald's songs are echoing still
Through every mountain glen!

THE FLAME-BEARER.

THERE 's nought so dreary in this world of ours
But has some spark of beauty lingering near, —
On frozen mountains bloom the constant flowers,
And stars above lone sepulchres appear.

O'er extinct craters, brightly poised, 't is said,
Hovers a rare and radiant humming-bird
Called the *flame-bearer*, — all save that is dead, —
Yet, mid the gloom, glad wings are ever heard.

IN EXTREMIS.

Oh, the soul-haunting shadows when low he 'll lie dying,
And the dread angel's voice for his spirit is crying!
Where will his thoughts wander, just before sleeping,
When a chill from the dark o'er his forehead is creeping?
Will he go on beguiling,
And wantonly smiling?

'T is June with him now, but quick cometh December;
There 's a broken heart somewhere for him to remember,
And sure as God liveth, for all his gay trolling,
The bell for his passing one day will be tolling!
Then no more beguiling,
False vowing and smiling!

MORNING AND EVENING BY THE SEA.

I.

At dawn the fleet stretched miles away
On ocean-plains asleep, —
Trim vessels waiting for the day
To move across the deep.
So still the sails they seemed to be
White lilies growing in the sea.

II.

When evening touched the cape's low rim,
And dark fell on the waves,
We only saw processions dim
Of clouds, from shadowy caves;
These were the ghosts of buried ships
Gone down in one brief hour's eclipse!

THE OLD YEAR.

THE white dawn glimmered, and he said, "'T is day!"
The east was reddening, and he sighed "Farewell," —
The herald Sun came forth, and he was dead.

Life was in all his veins but yestermorn,
And ruddy health seemed laughing on his lips;
Now he is dust, and will not breathe again!

Give him a place to lay his regal head,
Give him a tomb beside his brothers gone,
Give him a tablet for his deeds and name.

Hear the new voice that claims the vacant throne,
Take the new hand outstretched to meet thy kiss,
But give the Past — 't is all thou canst — thy tears!

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Fields, James Thomas
Ballads and other verses

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